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*MITHRIDATE. TRAGÉDIE PAR JEAN RACINE.* Edited with introduction, notes and vocabulary by LEO RICH LEWIS A.M. Benj. H. Sanborn and Company, 1921.

We are indebted to Professor Lewis for the first edition of Racine's *Mithridate* for English students that has been published in America. The feeling of gratitude is deepened as we note the attractive appearance of the book. The generous type of the text invites one to read; the clear arrangement of the footnotes allures one to study; the illustrations are really illuminating and the subject matter of the Introduction should be of special value to the novice, comprising as it does, admirably chosen criticisms from French and English authorities, a sketch and summary of the life of Racine, a short bibliography and a brief treatment of the form and verse of French tragedy. The French-English vocabulary of thirty eight pages, is concise but adequate.

Mr. Lewis, in a prefatory note, expresses the hope that we may concur in his opinion that *Mithridate* is by far the best play with which to begin the study of Racine with American students. Though of a different opinion, we are ready to be convinced by Mr. Lewis' arguments based upon twenty-five years of experience. We study the evidence eagerly but all the reasons we find stated, are in the prefatory note where Mr. Lewis says that *Mithridate* has many times enlisted the interest of his classes in a higher degree than *Andromaque*, *Britannicus*, *Iphigénie*, *Phèdre* or *Athalie*, and later in the appendix (p. 136) we are told, "At various points in the notes we have called attention to some of the features which give it exalted rank as a dramatic masterpiece." We have carefully examined these various points and find fifteen notes, seven of which are laudatory comments by French authors, and, as such, valuable and interesting. The remaining eight are enthusiastic comments by Mr. Lewis on certain lines and passages, an enthusiasm we share. But, there are just as many, if not more, beautiful passages in the other plays of Racine mentioned above, so we find ourselves unconvinced as to the super-excellence of *Mithridate*, and a little disappointed, for we were so ready to be persuaded!

We must confess to another disappointment. Mr. Lewis has had the good fortune to meet with only one difficulty in reading the play with American students (P. V), and that has been in dealing with the long first scene of Act III. This difficulty, he says, has now been overcome by the general influx of geographical knowledge and recent revelations of the boundless reach of national ambitions. We had hoped to see historical parallels indicated in the notes to this scene, for the benefit of the student. Perhaps we are not as optimistic concerning the amount of general information possessed by the average college student as is Mr. Lewis.

In the preparation of the notes Mr. Lewis shows careful study and sympathetic understanding. Having read in his prefatory note his opinion that—"no play excels *Mithridate* in the vitality of its interest for the average American youth and, consequently, in the steady incentive it offers to self-improvement in English style"—we are prepared for the emphasis laid upon meticulous translation, though we deplore the inelegance of his rendition of *Hé quoi?* (l. 579) by *How now*, which comes as an anti-climax after the "dazzling dramatic splendor of the tirade."

May we also say that it seems unfortunate to leave unresolved difficulties, as in line 656 where Mr. Lewis makes the comment: "The line has been called vapid. It is certainly hard to turn it into English which does not sound vapid." Perhaps Mr. Lewis' object is to stimulate the student. If so, he has succeeded, in one case at least, for we offer the following, at the same time suggesting that the line is *précieux* rather than vapid, terms not necessarily synonymous:

Il se plaint qu'à ses vœux un autre amour s'oppose.  
 Quel heureux criminel en peut être la cause?  
 Qui? Parlez.

Some other love, he cries, has lured you from him.  
 What fortunate thief has stolen, thus, so rich a prize?  
 Who is he? Speak.

Again, in the note to line 1049 gratuitous uncertainty seems to be injected into what might be made a simple translation such as—

How dare I join your fate to mine  
 Now, when I no longer seek but war and death?

The oft repeated note, "this passage requires re-phrasing," "a translation will not be easy to phrase" gives rise to the query as to whether undue emphasis is not given to literal renditions of the text, a doubt which is in part alleviated by the excellent French paraphrases given for obscure passages, as in ll. 173, 355, 487, 1035, 1195, 1611, and ten others.

On the whole Mr. Lewis' edition is a contribution of real value, especially to classes where emphasis is laid on language rather than on literature, and on English diction rather than on French paraphrase, while for more advanced classes the introduction and notes will prove helpful and illuminating aids to rapid understanding.

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*DIE LITERARISCHEN WEGBEREITER DES NEUEN FRANKREICHES*, BY ERNST ROBERT CURTIUS. Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, Potsdam, 1920.

This little book which has already reached its second edition in Germany, deserves the attention of every one who is interested in